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must release the results of a geological survey that opponents of its proposed uranium mine in western South Dakota say is necessary to ensure that local aquifers are protected, a federal licensing board of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission ruled Wednesday.

The intervenors to the proposed mine - members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and other concerned parties - had been pushing for data Powertech collected by drilling throughout the region to find concentrations of uranium ore, among other things. They've said enough data haven't been studied to know if the region's aquifers would be contaminated or depleted if the company were to mine.

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The Oglala Sioux Tribe and Consolidated Intervenors insist that not enough geological data was collected to effectively evaluate the potential for contamination. They say Powertech/Azarga, which is seeking permission to mine, has ignored evidence that the geological formations are fractured in the area into which water would be injected to wash uranium to the surface. Fractures in those formations would allow radioactive contamination to flow from one level to another, opponents of the mining say.

The two groups won a small victory Wednesday when the three-judge panel ordered Powertech to share additional geographical information it bought from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Powertech and the NRC staff experts are satisfied that the data used to support the license request have shown water quality and groundwater supplies will not be damaged by the mining. They also stressed that additional information will be collected once well-field development begins. At that point, Powertech has the authority to do further testing and will be required to do that monitoring to ensure the water remains uncontaminated.

The information Powertech has supplied is more than adequate to meet federal guidelines for the baseline-groundwater quality required, the company's attorney, Christopher Pugsley, said.

Jeffrey Parsons, the OST attorney, disagreed. He said the Dewey-Burdock mining presents a unique situation because of the thousands of boreholes drilled years ago in the area.

Waiting to gather more information after the company actually begins to develop the site will be too late, Parsons said.

"The current data and methodology are not adequate to assess the environmental impacts under the National Environmental Protection Act," Parsons said. "NEPA requires all relevant data be included."